

Faculty Senate Meeting
March 20, 2012

**Response to *ECU Structural Change Analysis*: Program Prioritization Committee
East Carolina University (February 15, 2012)**

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Recommendations in the report, *ECU Structural Change Analysis*, display a major misunderstanding of the role of the Department of Public Health at East Carolina University. The report is not cognizant of the fact that the mission of the Department is tripartite: (1) Education of Medical Students; (2) Graduate Education of physicians (residents and fellows; and (3) Education of MPH students. The committee was either unaware of the first two functions or disregarded their importance.

Brody School of Medicine was one of 11 medical schools throughout the nation designated by the Association of American Colleges (AAMC) as a Regional Medicine-Public Health Education Center (RMPHEC). More than \$150,000 of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention funding was competitively awarded to Brody to establish an integrated curriculum for prevention and population health (L.F. Novick is PI). Only medical schools qualify for this award and designation. Furthermore in June 2010, the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) modified its standards to explicitly include public health sciences and preventive medicine: ED-11 and ED-15. Presentation of this integrated curriculum was a significant part of the LCME visit to Brody School of Medicine in January of 2012.

In addition, Brody School of Medicine was one of 16 institutions competitively awarded a RMPHEC for postgraduate medical education of residents at Pitt County Memorial Hospital (Suzanne Lazorick, MD, MPH is PI).

Brody School of Medicine is recognized as the national leader in teaching medical students prevention and population health (see attached documents.) Three publications in *Academic Medicine* and the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* have highlighted this work as well as 4 presentations at national meetings. In 2008, the Association of Prevention Teaching and Research (APTR) awarded the Brody School of Medicine \$350,000 in CDC funds to develop a web-based curriculum in prevention and population health for medical and other health professional students. Brody has collaborated with the Duke University School of Medicine and the SUNY Albany School of Public Health to develop 7 modules that are being placed on the APTR website for national dissemination. This curriculum is being displayed at the APTR annual meeting on April 12, 2012. Because of its importance, an entire session at the annual meeting of the AAMC, November 4, 2012, is committed to this project with three Brody presenters and two national presenters.

It is evident that public health and medicine are intertwined and this will be increasingly so as health care costs increase and the emphasis on prevention in the Affordable Care Act. Separating this educational priority, both for future physicians and public health professionals, will have harmful consequences for both disciplines at East Carolina University.

In part, the recommendations contained in the *ECU Structural Change Analysis* may be motivated by an intent to develop a School of Public Health at East Carolina University. However, this goal can be accomplished more effectively and expeditiously by moving towards organization of a school of public health at the appropriate time rather than rearranging the positioning of the Department of Public Health in another College (Health and Human Performance or Nursing) where the link with the medical school will be weakened. The current rigorous and growing educational, research and service activities of the Department can be interrupted by a premature transition to another organizational unit.

Formation of a School of Public Health at East Carolina University (ECU SPH) is recommended because of its importance to the health of the people of North Carolina and its alignment with the mission and strategic plan of the University. Currently, health needs and national health reform create a rationale and opportunity for ECU to move forward with development of a School of Public Health, within the Division of Health Sciences. Initial implementation of the School of Public Health at East Carolina University is highly feasible because the various educational components (disciplines) that will comprise this entity are currently located at East Carolina University in various constituent colleges and schools. The current time is particularly propitious as the University is examining various organizational options to improve effectiveness at a time of fiscal stringency. Grouping the educational disciplines to form of a school of public health is possible in the near term using existing faculty resources. Over the longer term, a relatively modest investment would be needed in developing the three doctoral programs that are required for national accreditation of a school of public health

The nidus for the formation of a School of Public Health at East Carolina University can be the relatively new and highly successful public health graduate program at ECU, providing a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree. This program began in 2003 has experienced remarkable growth since its inception with an enrollment of 115 students and over 150 graduates; 74% working in North Carolina public health practice.

The majority of students enrolled in the ECU MPH Program are from North Carolina (84%). Since the beginning of the program, minority students have accounted for more than one-quarter of the enrollment. Approximately half of these enrolled individuals were working in a health related field before entry to the program. These students enroll in the program because they want a career in public health and plan to stay in North Carolina. Excluding those who go on to higher education following completion of their public health studies, 74% of our 113 MPH graduates to date are working in North Carolina. They serve as public health directors, hospital administrators, health educators, nurses and medical directors. They all have gained an orientation, perspective and skills to improve the health of the population. Others have been admitted to medical and dental school or are pursuing doctoral degrees in epidemiology, health policy, and planning.

The MPH Program received national accreditation in 2007 from the Council on Education in Public Health (CEPH). The commitment of the Brody School of Medicine and East Carolina University to expanding education in this field was demonstrated by the formation of a Department of Public Health at the Brody School of Medicine in 2008. Formation of the Department of Public Health at Brody School of Medicine was viewed as a step towards the eventual development of a School of Public Health at East Carolina University.

The Department of Public Health at the Brody School of Medicine has a research and service agenda attuned to the needs of North Carolina. Translational research includes a number of projects to increase physical activity, improve diet and counter obesity in eastern North Carolina counties. Major grants from the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation and Health and Wellness Trust have enabled faith-based lay health advisor programs directed at cardiovascular disease and diabetes in Edgecombe,

Duplin and Lenoir Counties. Funding for major service activities including continuing education has also been received including a grant from the Duke Endowment of more than \$700,000 to develop increased training for long-term care professionals in North Carolina. The Department has also had a contract with the North Carolina Division of Public Health to provide training to all Boards of Health in North Carolina.

The proposed School of Public Health will be based on further development of the singular profile of public health education, research and service activities of the Department of Public Health of the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University. The orientation of the new school will be to increase the capacity of public health professionals capable of practice in North Carolina. This is the focus of ECU MPH education. This focus will increase with the advent of health reform. The advantage of locating a school of public health at ECU is that placement of this entity on the Division of Health Sciences campus will add synergy to the interprofessional approach involving physicians, dentists, nurses and allied health education.

Development of the ECU SPH can will build on the progress and strength of the current Department of Public Health at the Brody School of Medicine melded with some faculty resources from the Colleges of Health and Human Performance and Allied Health Sciences. It is recommended that the ECU School of Public Health be formed in two stages. The first stage can be implemented in the near term as part of the planned University reorganization now under consideration. Existing faculty resources will be used to constitute the 5-discipline School. Epidemiology (from the Department of Public Health); Behavioral Health (from the Department of Public Health and the College of Health and Human Performance); Health Administration and Policy (from the Department of Public Health and College of Allied Health Sciences); Environmental Health (from the College of Health and Human Performance) and Biostatistics (from the College of Allied Health Sciences).

Stage 2 of development would be longer term and consist of gaining approval for three doctoral programs. The approval process for a doctoral degree in epidemiology is already underway (permission to plan at pending at the University of North Carolina General Administration.) A DrPH also will be developed. The third doctoral degree could be in behavioral health sciences or biostatistics.

As previously stated, no new faculty resources will be needed for stage 1; the actual creation of the School of Public Health at ECU, as a new entity reporting to the Vice-Chancellor of the Division of Health Sciences. To prepare for national accreditation, 5 basic departments will be needed each with 5 faculty. Stage 2 will be the period to achieve the requisite faculty complement and initiate the three doctoral programs for national accreditation by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). Specifically, over this 5-year time period only six additional faculty positions will be needed over the 2011-2012 baseline: 2 for epidemiology; 2 for environmental health; and 1 each for coordination of the doctoral programs (DrPH and behavioral health sciences or biostatistics.)